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DELIVERED TO THE

CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE

OF

SALISBURY,

BY

EDWARD DENISON, D.D.

BISHOP OF SALISBURY,

AT HIS SECOND VISITATION, SEPTEMBER, 1842.

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1842.

TO THE REVEREND THE
CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF SALISBURY,

This Charge,

PUBLISHED IN COMPLIANCE WITH THEIR REQUEST,

IS

AFFECTIONATELY AND RESPECTFULLY

DEDICATED,

BY THEIR FAITHFUL BROTHER AND SERVANT,

E. SARUM.

PALACE, SALISBURY,
Sept. 23, 1842.

A

C H A R G E,

ſc.

MY REV. BRETHREN,

THREE years have passed away since our last meeting—three years during which our Lord and Master has continued us, who are here present, in this our state of trial—years, of which hereafter we shall have to give account to Him, and as to which it much behoves us, even now, in secret and searching enquiry, to examine our own consciences, with the knowledge that his eye is upon us. We may be well assured that if we could read the secrets of our hearts as they are seen by Him, many a fair outward appearance would be changed into deformity—much that has had praise of men, would fall under condemnation; and even that which has been best, would be found to be so tainted with imperfection, and spotted with sinfulness, as to be made meet for his acceptance, only through the cleansing of the blood of

Jesus; and capable of reward only through his unbounded goodness, and for the sake of the same all-sufficient Saviour. It is in order that we may profit by his mercy that He has prolonged our probation, while others have been taken to their account. He has by the various workings of his Providence essayed to quicken us in our calling, and to draw us nearer to Himself. It may be that He has done this by blessings which we have not deserved. It may be by bitter sorrow—by sharp and cutting anguish piercing as a sword through our very souls. But it was his work. It was his fatherly hand: and if we know not what He doeth now; yet if we follow on where He leadeth, and profit by his teaching, we shall know hereafter. But that we may know this hereafter, we must be learning the lesson now: and it is well therefore to consider, whether we have made any progress therein during the lapse of a period of time, no inconsiderable portion of the life of any man, and in the case of many of us, probably a large part of what remains of our probation.

Let us not then, my brethren, deem this our Visitation solely an enquiry into the outward exercise of our ministry, and its effects; but a season too, when each is especially called upon to examine what his state is as regards that life, which is hid with Christ in God. It is as this is healthful and vigorous, that all will be well. The real springs alike of personal acceptance, and of ministerial usefulness, are those which are hidden from the eyes of men, though

known to God ; and which centre in and issue forth from that Saviour, who is the sole source of our spiritual life ; and from whom, by the influences of the Holy Ghost, our comfort, and strength, and usefulness must be derived. In proportion as we are sensible of our sinfulness and weakness, as we live by faith in intimate communion with Him, seeking the help of his Spirit by earnest prayer, and cherishing his grace by heavenly meditation, and steady obedience, his life will be ours : his strength will be made perfect in our weakness : his ordinances will be to us the sure and effectual channels of his grace : and our ministry, being pervaded with his life-giving Spirit, will be made the means of turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; and of building up in faith and righteousness a people acceptable unto God.

Our first, therefore, and chief enquiry regards our hidden life, whether this be indeed with Christ, and whether it be continually so more and more, as we advance in our trial. But this examination is to be made by each man for himself. The outward and visible marks and tokens of his ministry, though ordinarily they will in some measure correspond with the inward character, are yet no certain indications of its state : for the exercise of mere gifts may be made by God useful to others, though it is only when they are sanctified, and so made graces, that they can be truly blessed to ourselves.

The judgment of man, however, can only reach to

what is external. It is of this that I must speak ; trusting in faith that where the outward signs of the work of God are seen, there his life-giving Spirit has not been withholden : but that diligence in the work of the ministry springs, as it ought to do, from a heart devoted to Him.

And when in order to this I consider, both the general aspect of things in the Church, and that of my own diocese, so far as I am enabled to judge of it, either from ordinary observation and report, or from the more particular investigation which I have instituted with a view to this Visitation, I may be permitted to rejoice that there does appear to be among the Clergy a continually increasing appreciation of the responsibilities of their holy calling, and a more diligent endeavour to approve themselves neither faithless nor slothful servants of their heavenly Master.

The indications of this are plainly seen, as well in what relates to the ordinary course of life, as in the discharge of the peculiar functions of the ministerial office. They are seen in the higher standard of feeling which prevails as to the requirements of the Clerical calling, and the consequent greater rareness of offence given by such conformity to the world, as that calling is rightly deemed to make unsuitable. It is felt that the character of an ordained servant of a heavenly Master, attaches to a Clergyman under all circumstances and wheresoever he is ; and that there is a certain sacred sobriety befitting it, which is not only at variance with whatever is vicious, but

which makes occupations unbecoming, and places and scenes, and modes of amusement, altogether unsuitable for the Clergyman, of which in other persons the excessive use is perhaps alone to be condemned. This is a matter in which no rules will supply the place of that instinctive propriety of feeling, which will almost necessarily exist in a heart duly impressed with the sanctity and importance of the work of the ministry, and with that love for the brethren which will shrink from the idea of giving offence to one of those for whom Christ died. Warnings on this subject are, I trust, now comparatively little needed, even by the youngest of the Clergy: and yet, on such an occasion as this, the suggestion of such reflections, if unnecessary, may not be unprofitable. Consideration may show some among us their application to points which they had not before observed to fall within their scope, and so lead them to that more complete consistency in their walk and conversation, which befits those who are pledged to endeavour to be in all things "wholesome examples and patterns to the flock of Christ."

The due appreciation of the sanctity of the ministerial calling naturally tends to produce a corresponding diligence in the discharge of its peculiar duties: and of this, too, I am glad to believe that proofs are everywhere to be seen around us. It is in no inconsiderable degree to the impulse given by zeal thus directed, that we may ascribe the efforts which have been made of late to supply increased

Church accommodation, as well as for the establishment and better organization of schools, as nurseries of Christian instruction ; while a like progress may be observed in relation to all the other details of the work of the ministry. This is to be seen in the greater frequency of the celebration of divine service, and the administration of the Holy Communion, in the more constant preaching of the word of God, in the more careful preparation of the young for Confirmation, in the unwearied visitation alike of the sick and of the whole, in order to the reproof of the sinner, the instruction of the ignorant, the consolation of the penitent, and the building up of the faithful ; and in all other modes in which the servant of God is to approve himself to his Master in that household over which he is set.

In corroboration of these remarks, I may observe, that in this diocese there are now two services on the Sunday in forty-two parishes, in which there was only single duty at my last visitation ; that in sixty-five parishes, in which there was only one sermon, there are now every Sunday either two sermons, or —what in country parishes is perhaps better—instruction is given at one of the services catechetically, or by a lecture upon some portion of Scripture ; that the sacrament of Baptism is administered publicly during divine service, either always, or on certain definite occasions, in eighty-nine parishes, in which this used not to be the case ; that in many parishes the Holy Communion is celebrated much more fre-

quently than formerly, the administration of it occurring six, eight, or ten times a year, or in many of the larger parishes, and in some even of the smaller villages, once in every month; that there is an increasing sense of the propriety of distinguishing by their proper services at least the more important seasons of peculiar solemnity in the Church—Ascension-day and Ash-Wednesday I may name as instances of days till of late (strange to say) almost universally neglected, and now, I trust, in the way of being before long universally observed; while in no inconsiderable number of parishes all the days specially appointed by the Church to be kept holy are marked by their appropriate services, and in some the full order of the Church in the daily service is maintained. I find too that in many quarters increasing efforts are being made to effect that most important as well as difficult object, the retaining the younger members of your flocks under the influence of religious instruction beyond that age—unhappily almost always a very tender age—at which they quit the daily school. The importance of this cannot be overrated: but it would be foolish not to admit that it is one of the most difficult points to which the attention of the parochial Clergyman can be directed. The answers to my inquiries detail many painful disappointments, as well as some instances of encouraging success. It is plain that the results hoped for from evening or adult schools are likely to be attained only under very careful and well-considered regulations, and in cases where the

Clergy are themselves able to give them at least some measure of personal superintendence, and to bring their influence effectively to bear upon their management in all its details.

In some of the matters to which I have referred, I have been rather stating facts than giving advice; as I much prefer that changes which must be deemed more or less experimental, should originate from the free will of those who are convinced of their advantage, rather than from any suggestions given by myself. Nor, indeed, am I prepared, in my own judgment, to lay down any rule, in some of these points, as of universal application. But I rejoice to see so many indications of an increasing sense of the extent of the duty incumbent upon the Church. I rejoice to see increasing efforts to provide as fully as possible for the spiritual wants of the people, and to meet the feelings and wishes of those who yearn for more frequent opportunities of communion with God in his house of prayer, as well as to call to their duty the cold, and rare, and reluctant worshippers. The Church is constituted to act upon minds of all characters, calling out from each the best amount of religious service it is capable of rendering; satisfying with her fulness the high-wrought sensibilities of feeling, while she chastens them by her sobering influence, and turns to sound and healthful purposes energies, which if not allowed an orderly exercise, will seek for themselves an irregular and unwholesome development. In all evidences that the Church is more impressed with a sense of these high respon-

sibilities, and is strengthening herself in her great conflict against the world—is learning better to know her office, and is regaining the power to discharge it, I rejoice, yea, and I will rejoice.

True it is, that these things of which I have spoken are outward things; for of outward things only, as I before said, can I with certainty judge or speak. True it is, that they are but the forms of godliness; and forms may be separated from the spirit which should animate them; and then are, as the salt which has lost its savour, “good for nothing but to be cast out, and trodden under foot of men.” True it is, that services of prayer and thanksgiving, the preaching and the hearing of the word, and the administration and reception of the sacraments, may, by the sinfulness of man, be made the savour, not of life unto life, but of death unto death. True it is, that there is a tendency in the heart of man to the fatal delusion which results in this; and therefore, in all increase of outward observances, it is most necessary watchfully to guard against the paralyzing influence of formality: not to force them, as mere outward duties, on those who are incapable of receiving them; but to offer them, as means and opportunities of spiritual edification, to those whose hearts are prepared by Divine grace to accept and profit by them. It is so much more easy to render a formal service than to worship God in spirit and in truth, that I trust that an allusion to this danger may not be deemed misplaced.

But while I thus express my satisfaction at the

general improvement of tone and habit which I believe to be in progress among the clergy, you will perhaps expect that I should not pass over in silence those differences of theological opinion which have now for some years excited so much attention among the members of our Church; which in the course of the last year have done so in a very increased degree; and which appear to many persons, for whose opinions I entertain a very high respect, to threaten the Church with most serious and imminent danger.

I cannot now attempt to enter into much detail on these points; though it would not be fitting to leave you in ignorance of the general bearing of my opinion on a subject of so great importance, and which is in different quarters regarded in so different a light. I have, indeed, already said something on one branch of this controversy in a Charge at my last Ordination, which has since been published¹: something again I have said in a sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral at the Anniversary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which, as it accompanies the Report of that Society, is now, I trust, or soon will be, in all your hands². You will, however, allow me to remind you that, three years ago, without entering into particulars, I expressed a hope gene-

¹ "The Obligations of the Clergy in preaching the Word of God." A Charge delivered at his ordination in Lent, 1842, by Edward Denison, D.D., Bishop of Salisbury.

² "The Unity of the Church the condition of the Conversion of the World." A Sermon preached at St. Paul's Cathedral, May 27, 1842.

rally, that, whatever extravagancies of opinion might be seen in some quarters, the theological movement which has taken place in these late years, would, on the whole, by eliciting and illustrating the truth, confirm the principles, and strengthen the position of the Church. Nor do I even now see any sufficient reason to change the opinion I then declared. And believing, as I do, that the pious and learned men in whose writings these controversies originated, have been instrumental in bringing forward important truths from comparative neglect, I cannot too much deprecate the harsh and sweeping condemnation not unfrequently passed upon them, as if their exertions had been productive of unmingled evil. Much as I dissent from some of their opinions, and disapprove of the manner in which they have been expressed; and exaggerated as their views appear to me on many points, I cannot refuse to acknowledge that in several and weighty respects we are deeply indebted to them.

They have been the chief instruments in reviving the study of sound theology in an unlearned age. They have raised the standard of the ministerial character, by teaching men to trace the commission of the Clergy, through his Apostles, up to our Blessed Lord himself, and to see in this the sure warrant for their work. They have impressed upon the Clergy the obligation of walking orderly, according to the laws and regulations of the Church in which they are commissioned to minister. They have successfully vindicated the important truth of the nature and constitution of the Church from the vague and lax notions which used

too generally to prevail respecting it. They have given the sacraments their due place in the scheme of our holy religion, as contrasted with those who would make them little else than bare signs and symbols, instead of channels of regenerating and sanctifying grace. They have warned men not to rest contented in the mere beginnings of the Christian life, but to endeavour still to go on to perfection, encouraging them to aim continually at a higher standard of holiness, devotion, self-denial, and good works.

Now, I do not say that the teaching of the writers in question has been free from all objection on these subjects. On the contrary, it may be that there has been throughout a disposition to exaggeration; and there is, perhaps, no one of the above points on which statements more or less objectionable might not be found in one or other of the writings of this school of divines. Still, in the main, the tendency of their works has been, in my judgment, to establish sound views in the Church on the above important heads of doctrine; and for this they deserve our thanks.

On the other hand, the language which has been used in various quarters on many of the points in controversy between the Church of Rome and ourselves, appears to me liable to much of the exception which has been taken to it. The disapproval expressed of the mode in which these topics were handled in the ninetieth number of the *Tracts for the Times* was, as you are aware, the immediate cause of the termination of that work: and I believe that the

soundest and wisest members of our Church rejoiced both that the Bishop of Oxford interposed, as he did, on that occasion, and that his suggestions were at once followed in so becoming a spirit and manner. It would have been well if the evil had thus been altogether repressed ; but I lament to say that the pages of another periodical have continued to teem with matter justly open to the most grave objections both in point of sentiment and language, and tending grievously to unsettle the minds of the members of our Church. It is due to the distinguished individuals, whose names have been most prominently brought forward in reference to these discussions, to say that it is understood that they are not at all responsible for the periodical in question, with which they have not any connexion. But it much behoves those who are concerned in it to consider carefully how far various articles, which have, even of late, appeared in its pages, are such as ought to proceed from parties who owe allegiance to the Church of England, and are bound by her protests against the errors of Rome.

It savours of arrogance for men to presume to place themselves in a position extraneous to the Church to which they belong ; and, fixing their critic's chair in the wide regions of Catholicism, from it boldly and irreverently to examine, to question, and censure, if they do not finally condemn, that Church to which they owe, and, in general terms, profess to pay, loving obedience, and filial respect. Who shall

be surprised if teaching conceived in such a spirit, has on some minds a different effect from that which, I am bound to believe, its authors would desire : and that the communion of the Church of England should be quitted for that of Rome by men who have been accustomed to hear whatever imperfections there may be in the one industriously searched out, and invidiously magnified ; and to have the other presented to them with all its deformities concealed, and with whatever of good there may be in it carefully brought forward, and placed in the most attractive light ?

I can make much allowance for any occasional intemperance of expression in parties who certainly have been attacked in no measured terms. I am aware that it appears to some persons allowable to state opinions in an extravagant excess, in order to arrest attention, and in the hope that thus some portion, at least, of their views may be received. But taking into account all that may be said of this kind, and giving all due weight to it, as regards the character of the writers, I cannot, therefore, alter the opinion I feel it my duty to express as to the language itself.

But history throughout its pages shows us that no great movement of opinion was ever unaccompanied by extravagancies. Even portions of the truth, if held partially and exclusively, assume the character of error ; and it needs a discriminating judgment to discern at what point principles, sound in themselves,

when rightly understood, are in danger of being perverted by being made to lead to erroneous conclusions, apparently, though not really, resulting from them. Thus it is not to be denied that, at the time of the Reformation itself, the truths which we believe the Spirit of God then re-established in his Church, were by some made the sanction for licentiousness. And it may well be that even of those whose names we justly hold in honour, as having been instruments chosen of God to procure for us blessings which we cannot too highly prize; and whom we thankfully acknowledge to have been gifted with the learning, the judgment, the moderation, and the piety which enabled them to effect their arduous task,—it may well be that, amid the difficulties with which they were surrounded, even some of these may have expressed sentiments, or used language, which we should not be willing altogether to adopt.

Again, in the torpor of the last century, a spirit was awakened in the Church, by which many were turned from sin to righteousness, and which in the main we recognize as the work of the Spirit of Holiness; but I suppose that few even of those who most admire the characters of the chief agents in this work, will now say that all their statements, and doctrines, and practices, are to be defended or approved. Those who respect them most highly see many things in which it is better not to follow them; while others, who judge them less kindly, have unconsciously derived from them much of the

truth most precious to their own souls, most influential upon their own conduct.

Now, in looking at our own times, I cannot lay aside the recollection of what has been in former days; and I trust that, amid the present heat and ferment of men's minds, God is purifying his chosen instruments, and moulding them for his own purposes. And thus, while the rash, and the heady, and the high-minded, have, through presumption, fallen into error; and the obstinate have been confirmed in their prejudices by the very opposition raised to them: the moderate, and the teachable, and the humble-minded, have, out of all this strife of opinion and feeling, drawn for themselves more and more by degrees the latent element of truth: they have been led to search into their own opinions, and to approach nearer to that—to which doubtless no man in perfection attains,—the mind of God, as revealed in his written Word, and the system of truth and the mode of its communication, as established by our blessed Lord and his Apostles. And this, my Reverend Brethren, is the course which I venture earnestly to commend to you: beseeching you not to be led away, either by blind admiration, or by a spirit of indiscriminate censure; to eschew party feelings and party appellations; to cleave to Catholic truth, without arrogating to yourselves any distinctive title as doing so; and, remembering that the channel through which we receive Catholic truth is that of our own Church, and that our judgment re-

specting it is to be formed with deference to her authority; to prize the blessings and to maintain the principles of the Reformation, knowing that these were not the discovery of a new doctrine, but the recovery of primitive purity; to bear in mind that not all differences of opinion are differences of belief, or incompatible with unity both of faith and charity; to study to be quiet, and to do your own business, labouring to bring up those committed to your charge in the faith once delivered to the Saints, and in filial attachment to the Church their holy mother, that so when ye give account of them it may be with joy, and not with grief.

I pass now to other topics.

At the time of my last Visitation we had but recently established our Diocesan Board of Education. Indeed, the impulse had then but just been given, the effects of which, in the improvement and extension of our national education, are now beginning to be felt, and are, I trust, destined in their development to work incalculable good. The Church owes a deep debt of gratitude to those individuals of her zealous and enlightened laity, who first conceived the idea of this educational movement, and to whose unwearied efforts is mainly to be attributed the measure of success which it has hitherto attained.

The objects contemplated in this effort were, the extension of education by the establishment of schools, and its improvement by means of a supply

of more competent instructors, and a system of visitation by well-qualified inspectors. On each of these latter points I wish to say a few words.

When simultaneous exertions were made in so many quarters for the establishment of institutions for the training of masters, and this too by persons as yet but partially acquainted with the difficulty of forming such schools and the expense of supporting them, it was not unlikely that more schools would be opened than it would be found possible advantageously to maintain, or than the present demand for well-trained teachers would justify. The Board of Education in this diocese exercised, therefore, in my judgment, a very sound discretion, in abstaining at first from taking any step in this matter, and then in entering into an union with that of the adjoining diocese of Winchester, with a view to the establishment at Salisbury of a school for training mistresses, —a branch of the general plan which the circumstances of this diocese make peculiarly important to ourselves; and which then appeared little likely to be taken in hand in other quarters. We may congratulate ourselves that this institution is now fully answering our expectations. The ability, and judgment, and care of the lady who conducts it, justify the confidence we reposed in her. The exhibitions are regularly filled up as soon as vacant; and though there is as yet a deficiency of applicants who are prepared to bear their own expenses, we have had for some time in the school, through the liberality of

different individuals, as many pupils as, with our present limited accommodation, we are able to receive. The conduct of the pupils, as well as their improvement in their studies, has been throughout highly satisfactory: and the few who have as yet gone out to their work as school-mistresses are giving the best proof of the pains which have been bestowed on them by entering upon their important task both with a due measure of outward qualification, and, what is far more important, with a religious sense of the responsibility attaching to it, and with an earnest desire to do their duty to their heavenly Master in this their calling in his Church.

I regard with great satisfaction the commencement we have been able to make in this respect. I earnestly hope that the attention of the Committee will be carefully directed to the consideration of the points in which we are still deficient; and that sufficient funds will be placed at the disposal of the Board by the piety of the members of the Church in this diocese, to enable us to make such improvements as observation and experience may show to be necessary.

But with a view to the improvement of our parochial schools, the establishment of a well-organized system of inspection is a step likely to be productive of more immediate, and hardly less important results than those to be looked for from the training of instructors. This is a matter for which, as respects this diocese, I am especially responsible; and it is with much regret that I am obliged to admit, that

neither has any effective plan for carrying it on been established in the Church at large; nor one by myself applicable particularly to this diocese.

This defect, however, is to be attributed neither to the want of a due sense of the importance of this subject, nor to inattention to it; but to the difficulties, arising chiefly out of the unsettled relations between the Church and the civil authorities of the State, which have hitherto prevented the establishment of any general system for this purpose. Three years ago it was proposed by the Committee of the National Society, to retain in its service a body of inspectors, who should periodically visit the different dioceses, the salaries of such inspectors being paid by the National Society, and only their actual expenses in Visitation being borne by the Diocesan Boards. It was under this system that we had the advantage of an inspection of a large part of our Schools by a most able Inspector: and it may be very satisfactory to us to reflect, that the first experiment on the part of the Church towards carrying out this important object, was that made in the inspection by Mr. Feild of the Schools of this diocese. This plan was adopted by the National Society during those unfortunate differences between the ecclesiastical and the civil authorities of the State on this subject, to which I do not now wish further to allude. As soon as these differences were happily terminated by an arrangement satisfactory to all parties, it appeared to the Committee of the National Society desirable that

the whole work of inspection should be devolved upon the Inspectors, who were thenceforward to be appointed by the Queen, on the conjoint recommendation of the Archbishops of each province, and the Committee of Council for Education. Communications were with this object opened between the National Society and the late Committee of Council, and were renewed with that which now exists; and I fully hoped to have been able to announce to you, that we might shortly expect in this diocese the visit of an Inspector under these auspices, with instructions framed in all respects in conformity with the principles and order of the Church.

This expectation has, however, been disappointed by the refusal of the Committee of Council to undertake this office. I have therefore, since I was informed of this, made arrangements for an inspection of the Schools of this diocese, by an Inspector from the National Society, on the same footing as that carried on by Mr. Feild: and as I have endeavoured that there should not be any unnecessary delay, I have every reason to trust that this inspection may take place in the course of the ensuing winter.

The visits of the Inspector will, as in the former case, be confined to Schools which have been regularly placed in union with the Diocesan Board. And I therefore again earnestly invite all the Clergy of my diocese, who have not yet done so, to use their influence to place the Schools of their respective parishes thus in union, in order thereby both to

secure for them the benefits of inspection, and, as far as in them lies, to promote the uniform and harmonious working of our whole educational system.

Were it not for one point to which I wish to refer, I should pass over altogether in silence the most important alteration in the state of the Church which has taken place since my last Visitation—I mean that effected by the Act which has made such great changes in our Cathedral establishments, and has transferred so large a part of the revenues of these bodies to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. I should pass this over, because I do not wish to revive bygone differences of opinion, or to cast reflections upon a measure which has now received the sanction of the legislature. You know that in my opinion it might in some respects have been based upon sounder principles—might have had more of the character of reform, and less of that of spoliation; and might in various modes have been improved in its details. But I will not dwell on this subject. You are aware that by an amendment, made during the progress of the Bill through the House of Lords, the non-residentiary dignities and prebends existing in the Cathedral of this diocese, and generally in those of the old foundation, which it had been proposed to suppress, have been retained, though altogether stript of their revenues. This alteration was valuable, as preserving the essential character of our Cathedral; and as enabling it still to discharge the office of a centre of unity in our system, through the

connection which will be maintained with it by this body of prebendaries, dispersed through every part of the diocese. Nothing has tended so much heretofore to lower the character of these preferments, and to diminish their usefulness, as the allowing them to be filled by persons residing in other parts of the country, and who therefore rarely, if ever, attended at the Cathedral in order to perform their stated and statutable duty of preaching. I trust that in future there will be a change in this respect, and that the holders of these preferments will always be Clergy of the diocese, who will prize them for their own sake as a means of connection with the Cathedral, and as a mark of the approval and respect of their Bishop, by whom they will be bestowed. The periodical attendance at the Cathedral of these members of our body, will be valued by the Chapter and myself, not only for the sake of their services in the pulpit; but as a means of intercourse and communication with men justly respected in their several districts, and thus forming a valuable link by which the sense of unity may be maintained, and the spirit of unity promoted throughout this portion of our Church.

But it would be hard that the performance of this duty, attended necessarily with personal inconvenience, should also be allowed to be a pecuniary burthen to those who discharge it. If Clergy were to be obliged to come, perhaps fifty miles or more, at their own expense for this purpose, it would make it impossible for me to offer such a mark of

honorary distinction to any one, whose means would not enable him conveniently to accept it. It appeared therefore to me to be very desirable to provide for those Prebendaries who should preach in their turn, some small remuneration, just sufficient to obviate this inconvenience. The Dean and Chapter have very liberally resolved to appropriate for this purpose an annual sum of seventy pounds, as a means of providing for the present a payment to the unendowed Prebendaries of five pounds for each attendance at the Cathedral: and I have been able, partly from my own means, partly from money placed at my disposal by the pious feelings of an individual, to invest a sum of six hundred and fifty pounds, as the nucleus of a future fund, to which I hope that such additions will be made by those whose hearts may be disposed to co-operate in building up our Cathedral system, as will suffice to secure the object in view¹.

Another matter to which at my last Visitation I referred, as then unsettled, was that of the establishment of a more simple process for the trial of offences against the Ecclesiastical Law, alleged to be committed by Clergymen. I gave my reasons for objecting to the mode in which it was at that time proposed to effect this object: and I am glad to say,

¹ An account for this purpose is opened under the head of "The Prebendal Fund," with Messrs. Brodie and Co., Bankers, Salisbury, by whom, as well as by the Bishop of Salisbury, any contributions will be received.

that the Act which has since passed has made a great improvement in the law on this point, and is not open to the objections which in my opinion attached to the measure at that time contemplated.

I should hardly have adverted to this topic, but for the relation in which it stands to another question of great importance, which must shortly engage the attention of the Church and the Legislature—I mean the projected reform of the Ecclesiastical Courts.

No person who has even a slight acquaintance with the state of these tribunals—their vast multiplication, by means of the variety of subordinate and peculiar jurisdictions—the nature of the subjects of which they take cognizance—the admixture in them of things temporal and spiritual—the cumbrous and expensive methods in which the processes are carried on, and the consequent difficulty, to say the least, of satisfactory adjudication—can doubt that a very extensive change in the constitution and practice of these courts is greatly to be desired.

I am not, however, now going to enter at all into this question, as to its general bearings; but only to point out to you that other matters besides those of forms and legal processes—questions of higher principle than any which arise in connection with the succession of property and proof of wills, are necessarily involved in the abolition or reconstruction of these courts.

Whatever power of spiritual discipline exists in

the Church is capable of being exercised only through the intervention of the Ecclesiastical Courts. As matters now stand, it is only by means of these courts that spiritual offences can in any manner be visited by the censures of the Church, or that, as a last resource, unworthy members can be cut off from the fellowship of the Body of Christ. Now I presume that no one will deny that this power of guarding holy things from profanation, by the exclusion from them of unfit persons, is essentially inherent in every branch of the Church. The exercise of authority in this respect is solemnly referred to in the service appointed to be used in our Church at the consecration of every Bishop to his office, as being a duty committed to him not only by the ordinance of this realm, but also by the Word of God. It is true that, under the existing constitution of our Ecclesiastical Courts, and the rules of law to which they give effect, so great impediments are placed in the way of the exercise of godly discipline, even where it is most obviously needed, that it may be almost said to exist in theory rather than in practice. It is true, too, that much of the ancient law of the Church on this subject is altogether unsuited to present circumstances; that it has on some points been practically overruled by State legislation, and must in others be allowed to be obsolete. It is true, that the subject is one of great delicacy and difficulty, and is unhappily in some respects further embarrassed by the relation in which we stand to

those who are separated by their own act from our Communion. But, fully admitting these things, we must not forget that, at present, there exist at all events the principle and theory of discipline,—there exists a system which is a witness to the mind and spirit of the Church; and to the improvement of which we may look forward whenever times of leisure and peace give the opportunity, and circumstances make it possible to undertake the task with advantage. In the mean time, rarely as they are called into formal operation, the knowledge of the existence of such laws, and even the very cumbrousness and expensiveness of the modes of giving them effect, indirectly secure many of the ends for which they were enacted; and exercise a powerful, though vague and indeterminate influence on the members of the Church. While, therefore, the difficulties with which the subject is complicated supply very good reasons for tolerating much that is anomalous in our present condition, and for being very cautious in acting where the result may be different from what we might hope; they do not make it less necessary carefully to weigh the consequences of any alteration that may be proposed, and to see that principles be not sacrificed, as though they were in themselves unimportant, because there may be, at present, impediments in the way of their practical development.

Now, if the existing system of our Ecclesiastical Courts were to be swept away, without the substitution of any other in its place (and I am obliged to

imagine such a case as this, because the recommendations of the Commissioners appointed to examine into the state of the Ecclesiastical Law, in the year 1830, appear to me to go very nearly, if not altogether, to this extent), it is undeniable that one of two consequences must result,—either there will be no mode at all by which unworthy members of the Church can be removed from her communion; or the inherent power of the Clergy in this respect, as committed to them at Ordination, will be left to be exerted without the restraint of any of those cautions and checks by which it has heretofore been deemed right in every branch of the Christian Church to direct and restrict the exercise of this part of the functions of the priesthood. The first of these positions is one in which no branch of the Church of Christ has been placed, from the time of the Apostles to the present day. It would, in fact, strike at the very root of the Church, as an organized body: the other would throw us back upon first principles, doing away with all existing modes of orderly government, and leaving us to reconstruct them as best we might.

I earnestly hope that the Church will not be placed in either of these positions. It is the duty of her members to take care that, in making changes in the administration of her system, her spiritual prerogatives be not impaired. I trust that this duty will not be forgotten; but that, on the contrary, it will be clearly recognized, and effectually discharged.

But, in dealing with such subjects as these, it is impossible not to feel it to be a great anomaly that the Church is not permitted to speak her own sentiments through her rightly constituted organs, and to exercise those functions of deliberation and judgment which are entrusted to her by our constitution in Church and State. It is impossible not to feel, that it is unsatisfactory that the Church should not have any recognized mode of deliberating on subjects of whatever interest; of adapting her system to new exigencies; or of recording her decisions on the most important matters. This has now been the case for above a century; and we may well rather be thankful that no greater evils have resulted from it, than be surprised that some things have grown obsolete, which yet there is no authority to alter; that anomalies have sprung up, which it will be difficult to remove; and that various functions of high importance, which ought to be discharged by the Church on its own authority, and in its own sacred character, are carried on, with more or less of irregularity, but most imperfectly at best, by self-constituted societies, which have been almost compelled to undertake offices, from which the Church, in her proper character, is debarred.

I am not ignorant that much may be said in justification of the state of incapacity in which the Church has thus been placed. The history of the proceedings in Convocation at the beginning of the last century is in many respects a painful one: and though we may

deem that its apparent resolution to uphold sound principles was the immediate cause of the restraint imposed upon it, it is perhaps not to be regretted that its sittings were at that period discontinued.

It may be admitted, too, that there has not improbably been a providential compensation made to us for the loss of positive advantages, in that the Church has been restrained from evil action by the very trammels which have prevented her from making changes for good. It may well be imagined, that if the Church had always possessed the power of free deliberation and legislative enactment, she might, in some period of her history, have exercised such power in a manner unbeseeming her character as keeper and witness of the truth of God. She might perhaps have been drawn aside from the path of Catholic verity; and we might have had now to mourn over some fatal error, which it might be impossible to repair. And thus the forced incapacity of the Church for consultation may have operated, by the goodness of God, as a means of preserving from the faithless and wayward spirit of her members the blessings we are thankful to enjoy.

It is, however, obvious, that any advantage of this kind is dependent upon the fact, that this bondage of the Church really preserves us from change; and that alterations, which the Church cannot make for herself, are not made without her, either by the civil power, or in any other mode.

But if this should not be the case, but, on the

contrary, we should have all the evils of this state of incapacity without its advantages ;—if the Church may not have the power of making any changes, however much she may need or desire them, and yet may be committed to the most important changes, without her consent, and perhaps contrary to her opinion,—this state of things is one in which it is impossible willingly to acquiesce, and which, in my judgment, is fraught with evils and dangers far greater than any which are to be apprehended, be those what they may, in the orderly discharge of those functions which rightfully appertain to the Church.

No doubt errors might be committed in the exercise of these, and evils might ensue. There might be haste, and heat, and prejudice, and ignorance, and incapacity, and party divisions, and extreme opinions, and unsound judgments, and all the objections which ever attach to assemblies of fallible men, and from which Synods of Clergy cannot claim to be exempt. But I trust that there would be found also prudence, and calmness, and knowledge, and sound judgment, and moderation, and impartial minds ; I trust that faithful attachment to God's holy law, and an earnest desire to follow the guidance of the Spirit of wisdom and truth would keep us, if not from the presence, yet from the predominance of evil ; would restrain all excesses of a rash and meddling spirit, and teach us to repair what is defective, and to supply what is lacking, without tampering with what is sound, and

true, and established, through the teaching of the Catholic Church, on the foundation of the Word of God.

In this hope, and with this belief, I am free to avow, that I desire to see the day when the Church of England shall be permitted in a lawful Synod to exercise free deliberation, and to form, as I trust by the blessing of God she would form, a right judgment on those matters, the decision of which deeply concerns her character, her usefulness, and her peace.

And now, my Brethren, having touched, however imperfectly, upon all the topics on which at this present time I propose to address you, I commend you to Him, who is able to perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle you. May the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom! May Almighty God so replenish you with the truth of his doctrine, and adorn you with innocency of life, that both by word and good example you may faithfully serve Him, to the glory of his name and to the edification of his Church!

THE END.









